

COUNTRY Czechoslovakia
 TOPIC A Survey of the Control of the Czechoslovakian-Bavarian Border

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REMARKS The report is a summary of information obtained on Czechoslovakian border guard

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An evaluation of this report is requested from Army.

General.

1. During the past few years, the national borders of Czechoslovakia have been guarded by the Straz Narodni Bezpecnost (Corps of National Security) (SNB), which maintained six SNB border guard battalions (PS battalions) with a total strength of 3,500 to 4,000 men along the Czechoslovakian-Austrian and Bavarian border and probably substantially fewer personnel along the other borders. Each PS battalion consisted of 5 or 6 companies, with 3 or 4 platoons to a company. The platoons were stationed in towns and villages close to the border, controlling the border-crossing points and patrolling the border zone. SNB border guard personnel were professional soldiers who had previously completed their term of active service.
2. In October 1950, however, when the new recruits were inducted in Czechoslovakia, a reorganization program for the border guard service was initiated, resulting in a substantial increase of border guard personnel. It was probably implemented along the Czechoslovakian-Bavarian border by April 1951.

Organization and Subordination of PS Units.

3. The reorganized PS units of the SNB have remained subordinate to the High Command of Border Guard Troops in Prague-Vrsovice, headed by Major Josef Duda. The High Command of Border Guard Troops, in turn, is controlled by the Ministry of State Security. Along the Czechoslovakian-Bavarian border, there are five PS brigades with a total of 20 to 22 PS battalions, the headquarters and areas of which have not been completely determined. No information has been received on the organization of border guard units along the other borders of Czechoslovakia. It is believed, however, that the reorganization there is also under way or already completed.
4. The reorganized PS brigades control approximately the same areas previously assigned to PS battalions. Of the PS brigade headquarters, only a 4th Section, probably the DOZ Section which interrogates politically unreliable persons, has been specifically reported. A PS brigade is composed of a headquarters platoon or company, a heavy machine gun company, a technical company, a stand-by or reserve company, a training company, a motor transport platoon or company, an NCO school, and four or five PS battalions of five companies each.

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5. As a rule, PS battalions are stationed in border towns in which PS companies were formerly located. Most of the battalions have five companies, all of which are employed in border guard duty. The companies are located in towns in a three-kilometer border zone or, if no towns are available, in newly constructed wooden barracks. Reserve companies reported with some PS battalions are believed to be simultaneously training companies.

Personnel and Strength.

6. The personnel of the PS units include veteran SNB members and recruits of the 1928 class and a few of the 1929 class who were inducted in October 1950. The veteran SNB men constitute the cadre personnel of the companies and the battalion and brigade headquarters. [redacted] there was one veteran SNB man to two recruits in a company. Recruits earmarked for service with PS units were inducted in October 1950 into army units, such as those in Cheb, Mariánské Lázně, and Sušice, or into training units at the location of future PS brigades, where they underwent basic infantry training and, subsequently, border guard training. In late December 1950, the recruits were [redacted] PS units, where some were selected for HCO courses held by the PS brigades. They constitute a pool of potential officers. Inasmuch as a large percentage of recruits assigned to PS units came from Slovakia, many PS companies comprise equal numbers of Czechs and Slovaks, while other companies are largely composed of Slovaks.
7. Prior to February 1951, the PS companies had an average strength of from 35 to 45 men, but were allegedly to be brought up to 60 men. Some companies of 60 men were reported in March 1951. On the basis of an average strength of 40 men per company, a PS battalion is estimated at 230 men. Thus, a PS brigade made up of four battalions and brigade headquarters units, which are substantially stronger than the companies assigned to border duty, would number about 1,350 men. With the companies at their full strength of 60 men, a PS brigade would number about 1,750 men. Hence, it appears that, with all PS units brought up to full strength, a total of about 8,500 men would be assigned to border guard duty along the Czechoslovakian-Bavarian border as compared with approximately 1,500 men on border duty prior to the reorganization. All PS units have nationally [redacted] officers, with brigades usually commanded by captains or staff captains, battalions by lieutenants or senior lieutenants, and companies by lieutenants or senior HCOs.

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Arms and Equipment.

8. As a rule, PS companies are equipped with German and Czech rifles, models h8-A and h8-B submachine guns, and pistols. In addition, each company has from 3 to 5 model 26-32 light machine guns. Heavy machine gun companies are equipped with about 12 model 37-31 heavy machine guns.
9. The distribution of motor vehicle equipment within PS battalions is not uniform at the present time, but eventually each PS company employed on border guard duty is to be equipped with several motorcycles, one passenger car, and one truck. PS battalions and brigades also are equipped with motor vehicles which, however, are not sufficient to make the units concerned completely motorized. The PS units also have a varying number of horse-drawn vehicles which are probably used for routine supply runs.

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10. All PS units have signal-communications equipment. Companies employed in border guard duty communicate with each other and battalion headquarters by telephone. Some companies were also reported to have Soviet model RP-12 radio sets.
11. At first, PS personnel wore red collar patches and red brassards with their uniform. In February and March 1951, it was rumored that the red service color would be changed to green, with the left collar patch mounting a dog head's emblem, the right collar patch the letters PS, and the left sleeve a blue-white-red cockade-like patch with the letters SSB. The new insignia was allegedly to be introduced on 1 May 1951.

Border Control.

12. Depending on the terrain, PS companies are assigned a border sector of from 3 to 5 km in width. These sectors are continually patrolled along the border by patrols composed of 1 to 3 double sentries with dogs; these patrols are relieved at intervals of from 4 to 6 hours. The rear area of the border sectors is guarded by other patrols who are probably furnished by their respective PS companies. In each company sector, there are usually about 10 prepared sentry stands which are occupied by guards, from time to time.
13. Border control is made more effective by ditches, earthen shelters, wire entanglements and machine gun emplacements constructed in varying degrees in the border zone. Previous reports on the laying of mines along the border have not been reiterated lately.

Morale and Political Reliability.

14. There have been several credible reports on the exceptionally low morale among the enlisted PS personnel who complain about strenuous duty, insufficient furlough, lack of contact with the civilian population, and the need of recreational and educational activities. This is plausible in view of the fact that the majority of the PS companies are quartered in evacuated former German villages or in wooden barracks in the woods. With the OMB now conscripting recruits who did not go through a process of thorough political screening, the political reliability of the PS personnel has dropped to the level of that of the Czechoslovakian Army. Furthermore a large percentage of the PS personnel are Slovaks who are rarely pro-Communist. All this explains the great number of deserters from PS units during the past three months.
15. The reinforcement of the PS units was undoubtedly effected in an effort to tighten border control toward, and to seal hermetically Czechoslovakia from, the West. In view of the poor political reliability and discontentment of the new PS personnel, it is doubted that the ultimate goal of complete border guard control will be attained, or that the reorganization of the border guard service will substantially handicap illegal border traffic in the foreseeable future.

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